(b) if so, whether Government have taken any initiative to thrash out a price sharing formula on the lines of Srilankan industry practices; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) The Indian tea industry is at present facing a situation where the continuous fall in prices of tea, coupled with high cost of production, has adversely affected the economy of the tea plantations and small growers of tea are also getting low prices for their green leaf. The small growers feel that they do not get a reasonable price for their green leaf, while the bought leaf factories are of the view that the quality of green leaf supplied by the small grower needs to be upgraded in order to get better prices.

(b) and (c) In order to provide for a reasonable return to the small growers for the green leaf supplied by them to the factories, a provision has been incorporated in the Tea Marketing Control Order 2003 for fixing a price sharing formula between the manufacturers and the small tea growers as is being done in Sri Lanka. Tea Board had commissioned a study through the Institute of Cost & Works Accountants of India (ICWAI) to ascertain the cost of production of green leaves in small growers' holdings as well as the manufacturing cost of tea. Based on the findings of the ICWAI, Tea Board has proposed a price sharing formula.

Import of areca

1260. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of areca imported during 2001, 2002 and 2003 so far and the quantum of areca produced in the country during these years;

(b) whether important of areca has resulted in steep fall in the prices of areca in the country;

(c) whether any support price of areca has been fixed to reduce losses of areca growers of the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (d) The quantum of acecanut imported during 2001, 2002 and 2003 is 1048.94 MTs 125.07 MTs and 3975.90 MTs respectively. The quantum of arecanut produced in the country during 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, as per the data available with Ministry of Agriculture, is 3,73, 100 MTs and 4,09,400 MTs respectively. Imformation for the year 2002-03 is not yet available. The prices of arecanut have shown a declining trend. No support price for arecanut has been fixed by the Government.

Engineering Exports

1261. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a vast scope to promote engineering exports from the country;

(b) if so, the possibilities explored in this regard during the last three years;

(c) the achievements in this regard; and

(d) the proposals mooted in this regard for the remaining years of the Tenth Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) It has been the endeavour of the Government to promote exports including engineering exports. However, export market conditions are dynamic in nature and are influenced by external factors among others.

(b) Towards exploring possibilities of pushing up our exports of various engineering items, the following export promotional activities were undertaken by the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) a representative body of the trade sponsored by the Government for looking after the interests of the Indian engineering exports:

— Seminar-cum-Buyer-Seller Meets;
— Specialised Trade Fairs;